

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 855

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 5754

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GE

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE REQEUST FOR AXEN VISA

1. ON MAY 26 DR. HORST GRUNERT, GDR DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, WAS A GUEST AT MY RESIDENCE AT A LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF MRS. KATHARINE GRAHAM OF THE WASHINGTON POST. MRS. GRAHAM ASKED GRUNERT ABOUT THE PROGRESSS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND GDR. HE REPLIED CAUTIOUSLY, SAYING THAT CONSIDERING THE SHORT PERIOD OF TIME SINCE THE SEPTEMBER 4, 1974 AGREEMENT RELATIONS HAD PROCEEDED AS WELL AS COULD BE EXPECTED. HE NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR SIEBER HAD BEEN RECEIVED CORDIALLY IN THE US; THAT THERE WAS SOME JEALOUSY IN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS BECAUSE I HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY SED FIRST SECRETARY HONECKER, BUT I HAD BEEN RECEIVED BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE THAT THE GDR ATTACHES TO ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US. HE ALSO VOLUNTEERED THAT THE SPEECH OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE IN WEST BERLIN HAD BEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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"CORRECT" AND THAT THE GDR DID NOT ATTACH ANY RESPONSI-

BILITY TO HIM FOR THE PRESENCE OF FRG FOREIGN MINISTER
GENSCHER.

2. GRUNERT THEN SAID THAT POLITBURO MEMBER HERMANN AXEN, WHOM
HE DESCRIBED AS "THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON" IN GDR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WOULD PROBABLY ASK
FOR A VISIT TO THE US FOR THE PURPOSE OF ATTENDING THE
CHICAGO MEETING OF THE US COMMUNIST PARTY IN JUNE,
ADDING THAT AXEN'S VISIT TO THE US WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL,
PARTICULARLY SINCE DURING THE VISIT HE HOPED HE COULD MEET
WITH US OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON.

3. MRS. GRAHAM INTERVENED, SAYING THAT SPEAKING AS A
PRIVATE CITIZEN, SHE BELIEVED THAT SUCH A VISIT TO THE
COMMUNIST PARTY MEETING WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO THE GDR
AND WOULD BE WIDELY CRITICIZED IN THE US. SHE NOTED THAT
THE COMMUNIST PARTY WAS LEGAL BUT WAS SMALL GROUP WITHOUT
FOLLOWING.

4. AFTER LUNCH I TALKED PRIVATELY TO GRUNERT FOR
APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES, NOTING THAT HE HAD SAID DURING
LUNCH THAT HE HAD RAISED THE PROPOSAL FOR AN AXEN VISA
NOT ONLY TO STRESS ITS IMPORTANCE, BUT TO RECEIVE ANY
OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE ATTITUDE OF THE US.

5. I FIRST TOLD HIM THAT THERE WAS NO PROHIBITION
AGAINST SUCH AN APPLICATION.

6. I THEN SAID THAT IT WAS MY VIEW THAT SUCH A VISIT
WOULD BE UNTIMELY AND UNWISE. I RECALLED THAT THE POSITION
OF THE US CONCERNING OFFICIAL VISITS WAS WELL KNOWN TO
THE GDR: DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF OUR RELATIONS
SUCH VISITS WOULD NOT BE USEFUL. I SAID THAT WHILE THE
COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE US WAS A LEGAL PARTY AND WITHOUT
REPRESSION, IT WAS SMALL IN NUMBER AND HAD NO STANDING;
FURTHER, THAT IT WAS CLEAR THAT IN ITS JUNE MEETING IT
WOULD ATTACK THE POLICIES OF THE US AND WOULD ADOPT
RESOLUTIONS OF CONDEMNATION. I ASKED HIM IF IT WOULD NOT
BE TRUE THAT AXEN WOULD SPEAK AND VOTE IN SUPPORT OF
ATTACKS ON US POLICY. HE DID NOT RESPOND TO THIS QUESTION.
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I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT SUCH PARTICIPATION IN THE MEETING
OF THE US COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD BE RESENTED BY THE US
GOVERNMENT, THE CONGRESS AND US CITIZENS AND THAT IT WOULD
HINDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO
COUNTRIES.

7. GRUNERT ASKED IF I THOUGHT THAT AXEN WOULD BE RECEIVED
BY US OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF

STATE. I RESPONDED THAT I COULD NOT SPEAK FOR THEM, BUT I DID NOT THINK ANY OFFICIAL OF THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD RECEIVE AXEN ON THE HEELS OF HIS PARTICIPATION IN THE US COMMUNIST PARTY CONVENTION.

8. FINALLY, GRUNERT REDUCED HIS POSITION TO ONE ARGUMENT: THAT THE GDR WOULD BE EMBARRASSED AND ISOLATED IN THE COMMUNITY OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES IF THOSE COUNTRIES WERE REPRESENTED AT THE CONVENTION AND THE GDR WERE ABSENT. HE ASKED ME TO REPORT THIS MATTER TO THE DEPARTMENT, SAYING THAT WITHIN A DAY OR TWO HE WOULD SEE AXEN AND WOULD REPORT OUR CONVERSATION TO HIM.

9. GRUNERT'S BASIC ARGUMENT OF ISOLATION OF THE GDR, ASSUMING THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WOULD BE PRESENT, RAISES THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING POLICY;

A. WHAT ARE THE PRECEDENTS REGARDING THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS TO REPRESENTATIVES, AND PARTICULARLY PARTY OFFICIALS OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF THE US COMMUNIST PARTY? IS IT NORMAL FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES TO ATTEND? IF SO, AT WHAT LEVELS WITHIN THEIR OWN PARTIES?

B. WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE DEPARTMENT ON THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS TO SUCH REPRESENTATIVES TO ATTEND THE JUNE MEETING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY? (A REQUEST FROM AXEN, WHOM WE BELIEVE TO POSSESS A DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT, MIGHT WELL TAKE THE FORM OF A DIPLOMATIC NOTE INDICATING THAT HE ALSO WISHED TO CONSULT WITH THE GDR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND MEMBERS OF THE USG.)

10. IT IS PROBABLE THAT GRUNERT MAY ASK TO SEE ME AGAIN
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SOON AND I WOULD THUS APPRECIATE EARLY GUIDANCE.COOPER

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